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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ The NJSP Gang Survey measures *perception* of the gang problem, rather than *gang-related crime data*. New Jersey's legislators have recognized the necessity of implementing a statewide gang tracking system to obtain this type of data, and have introduced legislation that would require law enforcement officers to report the occurrence of all gang-related incidents. Those bills have languished.

In the past, the Governor and the OAG have issued executive directives mandating reporting of bias crime incidents and domestic violence. We recommend that the Governor and the OAG consider issuing an executive directive regarding the systematic collection of gang crime data. Furthermore, we believe that the Governor and Attorney General should endorse, support and promote passage of this legislation.

- ❑ The NJSP Gang Survey serves as one of the state's principal sources of strategic information concerning New Jersey's gang environment. DLPS and other state agencies need reliable information about the gang environment in order to proceed with their planning and resource allocation processes.

In 2004, the gang survey questionnaire was designed and administered by enlisted personnel with little-to-no prior survey research experience. Their decision to rely on a combination of interviews and self-administered mail-in questionnaires resulted in problems with data completeness and data consistency. These data problems have hampered analysis and reduced the reliability of conclusions that can be drawn from the survey.

The quality of future survey results can be improved by outsourcing questionnaire design, survey administration, and tabulation of the results to private sector opinion research contractors or academic research specialists. The cost of such outsourcing should be incorporated into the annual Street Gang grant request, permitting the survey to be conducted on an annual basis. The option of coordinating survey response through a secure Internet portal on the NJSP webpage should be vigorously pursued.

- ❑ The majority of municipal agencies reporting gang presence did not participate in a formal gang task force or other collaborative effort during 2003. Although levels of participation may have increased in the past year, renewed emphasis from OAG on the value and importance of the task force approach to gang-crime enforcement appears to be warranted.

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- Since March 2000, the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) has mandated reporting of violent incidents and vandalism occurring in New Jersey's schools. This data is collected in the DOE's Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting System (EVVRS), and may contain information about gang-related incidents that were not recognized as such by school personnel. In order to integrate this data into its overall assessment of New Jersey's gang environment, the Division of State Police --through the Information Technology Bureau-- should initiate efforts to obtain a copy of this data from DOE. Detailed analysis of EVVRS data can then be combined with Gang Survey data and other information to provide a more complete understanding of gang activity in New Jersey schools.

- Almost a third of municipalities with a 2003 gang presence did not know what impact gang members released from prison had on the gang problem in their communities. As a result of relationships developed between gang investigators in some municipal agencies and staff at NJ Department of Corrections (DOC), ongoing exchange of information occurs concerning recent or impending release of gang members from prison. Other agencies at the municipal and county level have not always taken the initiative to establish similar relationships with DOC. Because this exchange of information is a powerful tool in the effort to control the spread of gang crime, a multi-level law enforcement approach addressing this issue should be undertaken. State agencies --DOC, State Parole Board, OAG, NJSP, JJC, AOC-- must work with the County Prosecutors and Sheriffs to develop workable notification methods that link municipal police agencies with information about released gang members.

- In the 2004 Gang Survey, suburban municipalities were unable to estimate the number of gang members for more than 40% of gangs reported in their jurisdictions. The NJSP Street Gang Bureau should strive to work with suburban law enforcement agencies to conduct both periodic gang-focused training as well as offering longer-term support.

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- ❑ Survey respondents indicated that an estimated 43% of gang members are less than 18 years of age. Additionally, almost half of responding agencies (46%) reported gang-related incidents in their schools. Any comprehensive effort to gather information on gangs will require law enforcement agencies to actively partner with schools. Educators must be trained to recognize gang activity within their schools. Law enforcement must assist the education community in developing lines of communication to share information in a timely manner.

- ❑ Both of the issues above are an indicator that more detailed assessments of gang activity are needed at the municipal level. The NJSP Street Gang Bureau (possibly in conjunction with the Community Partnerships Troop) should oversee the development of a “template” for creating municipal level gang assessments and perform such an assessment as a pilot project. The project would draw on the knowledge of a wide range of community participants and synthesize information to develop a comprehensive picture of the municipality’s gang situation.